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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001242

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/PPD

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: REACTIONS TO ATTACK ON ISTANBUL CONSULATE

Classified By: DCM Doug Silliman, for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Official Reactions

11. (U) Following the attack in front of Consulate General Istanbul at approximately 1100 on July 9, at 15:28 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs released the following statement (unofficial Embassy translation):

"We strongly denounce the heinous armed attack that occurred in front of the US Consulate General in Istanbul and caused the death of our police officers. The level of existing security measures for the US missions, personnel and interests has increased. We wish (God's) mercy for the security members who lost their lives in this vile attack. We extend our condolences to their loved ones and wish them forbearance."

STATEMENTS OF CONDEMNATION

12. (U) Other top Turkish officials responded to the attack in the press throughout the day:

-- President Gul issued a statement: "I strongly denounce these terrorist acts. Unfortunately, three police officers were martyred. I wish God's mercy for them. I wish a speedy recovery for the wounded. I wish patience to the police community, their families and our nation. Turkey will fight to the end against those who organized these acts and against the mentality behind it."

-- Prime Minister Erdogan said, "The treacherous attacks that target the comfort and stability of Turkey will not reach their goals because of the determination and will of our heroic security forces."

-- Chief of the Turkish General Staff GEN Buyukanit said, "As the Turkish Armed Forces, we strongly condemn the heinous attack launched against our police."

-- Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan said, "This attack -- which I denounce with hatred, no matter with which purpose or by whom it was launched -- targets the comfort, social peace, and unity of Turkey. Our security forces and all institutions of our state are determined to fight against such heinous incidents in the most effective way. Turkey is strong enough not to be affected by such terrorist acts."

-- Opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal stated, "I forcefully denounce this attack. At the same time, neutralization of three of the attackers shows the determination of the security forces in the fight against terrorism."

SENIOR OFFICIALS SUPPORT CONGEN ISTANBUL

13. (C) In Istanbul, the Istanbul governor, mayor, chief prosecutor, and chief of police all arrived on the scene within 30-40 minutes after the attack. All expressed their condolences. Governor said security at both the Consulate and the Consul General's residence would be increased. Interior Minister Atalay flew to Istanbul from Ankara mid-afternoon with TNP director Koksall to visit the scene.

PRIVATE CONDOLENCES

14. (C) Foreign Minister Babacan called the Ambassador to express his condolences and offered all assistance necessary. The MFA has been in touch with police regarding additional security at the Embassy. The Ambassador in return expressed his condolences for the Turkish police officers killed in the attack.

15. (SBU) Prime Ministry advisor Ahmet Davutoglu also called the Ambassador to express his condolences.

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Davutoglu indicated that he had been in a meeting with the Prime Minister when news of the attack came through, and that Erdogan had instructed him to pass his personal condolences and offer of assistance. The AKP official in charge of elections organization Orhan Kaya called to express his sorrow, as did AKP Diyarbakir deputy Abdurrahman Kurt. Council of State (Danistay) judge Huseyin Poroy called to extend his sympathies and denounce the attack. CHP Vice Chairman Sinan Yerlikaya also expressed his regrets.

16. (U) The Embassies of Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Poland, Ukraine, and Indonesia expressed their condolences. A representative from Turkish Petroleum also called.

EXTENSIVE, IF SPECULATIVE, MEDIA PLAY

17. (U) Media coverage of the aftermath of the attack was carried live by NTV, CNN Turk, Kanal 24, Star TV, and Haber Turk. Ambassador Wilson's press availability was carried live by NTV, Star TV, CNN Turk, Samanyolu and by tape by other TV channels, including state broadcasting company TRT. President Gul's comments condemning the attack were summarized but not carried live.

18. (U) Embassy spokesperson Kathy Schalow was interviewed over the phone and the interview was broadcast on CNN Turk and Haber Turk. Television coverage of the attack was continuous with no commercial breaks for several hours. As developments unfolded, television news outlets provided up-to-the-minute (if not always firmly established) details. In addition, television crews interviewed eyewitnesses and carried their accounts of the events. At 1:06 pm, NTV carried a live press conference with Istanbul Head Prosecutor Engin, who was the first to announce "this was a terrorist attack," and "the attackers were between the ages of 25-30."

19. (U) AA, a semi-official wire service, reported that

Istanbul Governor Muammer Guler claimed that police had determined the identities of the three dead assailants (Embassy cannot/cannot confirm this fact.) .
Kanal 24 is reporting that Al-Qaeda claimed Responsibility, saying "The attack was perpetrated by Al Qaeda's Afghani Group." NTV reports that two of the Turkish assailants had traveled to Afghanistan. (Again, Embassy cannot/cannot confirm any of these reported details).

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